

*Application to GOD, Reformation and Unity among
themselves, the best Resource of a Nation, on any
threatened Invasion, or alarming Distress:*

Enforced and Recommended in a

DISCOURSE

On the FAST, by Authority appointed,

MARCH 14, 1760.

By JOSEPH PARSONS, A. M.

Late of Merton and St John's College, Oxon.



L O N D O N:

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M.DCC.LX.

DISCOURSE



TO THE
RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,

T H O M A S,

Lord Bishop of *NORWICH.*

My LORD,

*I*T is too notorious that the Place of my Residence, is not the only Cure in this Diocese, where, (notwithstanding your Lordship's most vigilant Care and condescending Counsel to your inferior Clergy, in the Discharge of their sacred Trust;) Men have crept in, unawares, to disturb the Faith of Some, and corrupt the Morals of Others; to head and harden the Perverse and Unruly, and lead captive the Silly and Weak-minded: You will therefore pardon me, if I crave the Sanction of your venerable Name, to patronize an Attempt to obviate a growing Evil,
pregnant,

pregnant, as it seems, with Mischief, to the Annoyance of real Godliness, and that Christian Love and Unity, which above all Things ought to be studied.

If this little Effort meets the Honour of your Lordship's Approbation, and is received as a Testimony of Duty and Respect to your high Character; it will be a Tribute gladly offered by,

My LORD,

Your LORDSHIP's most dutiful,

and obedient humble Servant,

Hemenhall,
near Norwich,
July 14, 1760.

Joseph Parsons.



TO THE
Worthy INHABITANTS
OF

Hemenhall and Bedingham.

SIRS,

THE known Attempts of some busy and upstart Men, to disturb and unsettle your Minds, and draw your Attention from my Ministry over you in the Lord; ought to invigorate my Endeavours to keep you from falling, and by all Means, to seek your Establishment in the Truth, and Unity of Love and Worship.

To this End, the Discourse composed for your Use, and delivered on the Day appointed by Authority for a General Fast, is at Length put into your Hands for your
Perusal.

*Perusal: That it may be kindly taken, and beneficial to
build you up in Peace and Holiness, is the Desire and
heartly Prayer of,*

Your affectionate Minister,

and humble Servant,

J. Parsons.

July 14, 1760.



2 KINGS XIX. 19.

Now therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his Hand, that all the Kingdoms of the Earth may know that thou art the Lord God, even thou only.



O observe Piety and Goodness intermixed with Greatness, may seem rare, and, indeed, seldom met with in the History of Personages of highest Rank. To find this Goodness distressed, without Human Resource, and in the utmost Danger, from an irreligious and cruel Oppressor, must occasion melancholy and pathetic Reflections :

BUT,

BUT, to see a Prince in the Temple of his GOD, with Hands and Eyes lifted up unto Him that dwelleth in the Heavens; a Heart also anxious, because of jeopardy to himself and People, from the Menaces and powerful Armaments of a near approaching and ravaging Invader, will afford a very useful and edifying Scene; to teach, That the greatest on Earth may be in Circumstances to need, and to ask Help from Above; and, that the lowest of the Sons of Men have Example from the highest, to seek unto GOD in their Distress.

WE read, previous to my Text, that *Hezekiah* was a good King, put his Trust in the LORD, clave unto Him, and kept his Commandments.

HIS great Piety and Worth did not exempt him from Enemies. The King of *Assyria* conceived Umbrage against him, (possibly, because of the Zeal and Attachment he shewed, to promote the Honour and Welfare of his own liege and faithful Subjects.) However, this wise and pacific Prince thought expedient to make some Concessions, and offer Terms of Peace, rather than involve his Subjects in a ruining, expensive War, with an Enemy who had given terrible Evidences of his Power and Fury, in the Places and Countries he had thought fit to attack, as *Gozan* and *Haran*, *Rezepb* and *Eden*.

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THESE Overtures for Peace and Accommodation, received no other Return from the haughty Aggressor and fierce Destroyer, than bitter and blasphemous Reproaches, with the speedy March of a great Host, an immense Number of armed Forces against *Jerusalem*, the Metropolis and Seat of the Kings of *Judah*.

WHAT was to be done on this alarming Emergency? doubtless all prudential Methods were used that could be thought on, to prevent this savage and domineering Enemy from executing his exterminating and evil Purpose, of destroying, or else driving the Natives from their Lands, to make room for Strangers and Foreigners, and to introduce a corrupt and false Religion, where had been the Temple of the LORD, and his true Worship, under legal Priests and really inspired Prophets, hitherto maintained.

THE sacred History doth not inform us of Ambassadors, sent to distant Parts to hire Troops, or purchase Alliances, to augment their Strength against the Day of Battle; nor do we find that the Subjects were in a Hurry to put themselves in Aray and Posture of Defence, as if in the Wisdom and Arm of Flesh only was Security.

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SILENCE

SILENCE was the commanding Word given to the People, to quell the first rude Attack of Reproaches from the Assailants, and a Detachment of Nobles dispatched to the Prophet of the LORD; while the affronted and afflicted Prince, great and happy in his Humiliation, rent his Clothes, covered himself with Sackcloth, and went up into the House of the LORD, and spread before the LORD the taunting Letter and Message he had received from the impious Adversary; and prayed before the LORD in most vehement and expressive Language. (See 2 Kin. xix. 15 to 19.) *Now therefore, O LORD our God, I beseech thee save thou us out of his Hand, that all the Kingdoms of the Earth may know that thou art the LORD God, even thou only.*

WE have here Words put into our Mouths, dictated no doubt by the Spirit of God, very suitable to our present State, and the Occasion of our solemn Meeting: Let us beseech the LORD to prepare our Hearts to offer them with like holy Disposition, Faith and Fervency.

WE may very reasonably, and to our Edification and Comfort, conclude with ourselves, that if we do indeed desire to have our Devotion before the LORD accepted, and our Prayers now favourably heard, as were those of this good Prince; it concerns

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us to imitate his Example, and be zealous for the LORD, steady in the Temple-worship, or Form of Ministration established ; and carefully to do respectively our Parts, to discountenance and root out idolatrous Superstition, and check the mischievous Steps of those, who set up novel and strange Worship, and separate themselves from the Truth and Union, which the Gospel came to inculcate and maintain.

OF this pious and great Man, we read expressly, that "he did that which was right in the Sight of the LORD;" he removed the High Places erected for separate and schismatical Worship, brake the Images, and cut down the Groves: *He trusted in the LORD GOD of Israel, he clave unto Him, and departed not from following Him, but kept His Commandments ; and the LORD was with him, and he prospered.*

IT is worthy Remark, that we find no Sin branded, in the Old Testament, with greater Reproach and attended with heavier Punishment to the *Jews*, than to revolt from the Temple-worship established at *Jerusalem*, and by the Law of *Moses* provided for.

IT is likewise a great Fault and Misfortune, for Christians under the Gospel-dispensation, to be divided and multiplied into separate Communions.

SOME are Advocates for Superstition, Idolatry and Will-worship; Others run into the contrary Extreme of Licentiousness, or vain Enthusiasm: We profess and are engaged in the middle Way; which, if we persevere faithfully to walk in, we shall find our latter End happy, through the Mercies of our LORD JESUS CHRIST; who hath called us with a holy Calling, to believe in His Name, to obey and worship Him with pure Minds, in Peace, Unity, and Love.

It is not, my Brethren, a light Thing to separate and make Divisions in the Church of God.

THE Apostle St Paul gives in Charge, and makes it of great Consequence, *to mark those who cause Divisions, and avoid them*, Rom. xvi. 17.

RECOLLECT the Fate of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who made Dissention, and withdrew themselves from Obedience and Regard to the LORD's Priests, Numb. xvi.

REVELVE also in your Minds the great Sin of Jeroboam, who is stigmatized in the holy Volume, with making Israel to sin; setting up Calves in Dan and Bethel; deluding the People with false and corrupt Forms of Worship, ordaining the lowest for Priests, and

and drawing the Attention of the Populace he had usurped Dominion over, from the Duty and Worship by God himself established in *Jerusalem*.

WHAT, moreover, was the Burden and Tenor of the Charge, pronounced by the LORD's Prophets against the Sons of *Israel*? But that they grossly followed their own Inventions, set up strange Forms of Worship, and forsook the LORD and his Ordinances, which they and their Fathers had covenanted to follow.

ABOVE all this, what doth our LORD CHRIST, the last and great Prophet, so solemnly enforce to all his Disciples and Followers, as Love and Union?

IT was his principal Legacy, the distinguishing Token and Characteristic of them who are really His, to live in Unanimity and Love. *By this, say His holy and infallible Lips, shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another.* How can they love, who will not unite in the same Worship? They must, as we find they do, presume highly of themselves, secretly despise and judge hardly of others, whom they will not accompany to the House of God, and the established Ministrations of Religion.

If any are moved to think, (according to the Speech and Manner of some) that there is no Assembly of Saints,

Saints, no Edification by the Word, no praying by the Spirit, no Communion with GOD and CHRIST, but in the Places and under the Men and Observances of their own choosing, they will be apt to condemn and find Fault with those of a different Way, and perhaps of better and more enlightened Capacity than themselves.

THIS must necessarily produce Shyness and Heart-burning, want of mutual Civility and good Offices, to the Hurt and Damage of both; as well as plainly contrary to the Will and Injunction of Him, who is LORD over and Saviour of all, who are studious to follow his Humility, Meekness, and Love.

HE laid down his Life for all, that all Men might unite in one holy Faith, Communion, and Fellowship; with one Heart and Voice serving GOD, and doing Good to one another, as we are united in one blessed Hope, and seek for the same heavenly Inheritance.

THE true Servant of CHRIST is humble, exalteth not himself, is not puffed up with fancied Revelations, will follow and bear to be directed by those who have the Sanction of public Authority, Succession, and Claim from CHRIST and his Apostles to have the Rule over, and minister unto Him in the LORD: Will not say he hath the Spirit, or is led by the

the Spirit, without being able to give better Proof of the Spirit, than his own bold Affirmation and Word, or the wild Cry and Imagination of Those, who shut their Eyes against the Light, and plain Doctrines of Truth and Holiness, to court Delusion and Error.

Is CHRIST divided, hath he Concord with the Infidel and Profane, or those of a private, perverse and unruly Spirit? If we belong to CHRIST, are indeed living Members of His Body, we shall study to preserve Unity of Spirit in the Bond of Peace, to have Communion and Fellowship with all, who call on the Name of the LORD JESUS.

WHEN Christians through Pride of Imagination, separate and disunite, they break themselves from the Church, and Body of Him in whom we are called to be guided and enlivened by the same Spirit; they become as Branches cut off and torn from the spiritual Vine, and can no longer bring forth Fruit, but are fitted for burning.

It is necessary to say, and press upon your Minds, the Consideration of these Things; to encourage Stedfastness and holy Union among ourselves. Because there is a Spirit gone out into the World, restless and busy to divide us, and it is to be feared, in some Sort occasioned through our own Fault; our little Regard to live according to the Purport and
Rules

Rules of the best Religion and Way of Worship in the World; and from thence only can get Ground and prevail.

A House, Community, or Kingdom divided against itself cannot stand; and the more we separate, dispute and contend one with another, the easier Prey shall we become to the common Enemy and Invader, who hath all Machinations at work, to disturb and overfet us.

If they who attempt Innovations, and make Divisions, though with ever so specious and godly a Pretence, are not in fact set on Work from Hell and the covert Agents of the wicked One, the prime Author of Confusion and perverse Opposition, (which, I would unwillingly believe, did not their spiritual Pride, their presumptive and bold Speeches, lying Words, and lewd Actions, openly proved and manifest, too plainly bespeak their Connection :) They are yet, it is certain, whether they consider it or not, serving the Purpose and effectually answering the Wish of those, who mean nothing less, than to destroy and rob us of our Place and Nation; that we be no more a free People, serving God after the Manner of our Fathers.

If we multiply into Sects and separate Interests, how shall we form a Body of Wisdom and Force sufficient

sufficient to encounter the Opposition which is aiming to overturn all our Marks and Boundaries, both civil and religious, and to bring upon us an Inundation of Popish Superstition, and arbitrary Tyranny? If Danger will not engage us to lay aside the Workings of a private Spirit, and to unite in one common Cause, the Cause of our God, and the Cause of our Country, we shall deserve to be given up into the Hands of the Enemy, as a People bereaved of Counsel; whom the LORD hath forsaken, and left to follow the Devices and Measures of their Ruin.

THE good LORD at length awaken us to avert this desperate and sore Evil, by casting away our Sins, our foolish and vain Delusions, our unreasonable and groundless Dissentions, and turning and seeking Him unanimously and faithfully, in the good and right Way, which he hath hitherto, and we trust, will always secure and prosper us in, both to our temporal and eternal Peace!

FOR our further Admonition and Improvement, it may be of moment to recollect and revolve in our Minds the striking Instances of this Pattern of Piety and Devotion, here set before us; and surely it concerns us, to give all Diligence to find out our own Deficiencies and Mistakes, and gladly to amend them, upon so great a Scripture Example, and such urgent Call and Necessity as now offers, that we

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may likewise meet with the same happy Success and Issue to our Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer, in the Overthrow and Disappointment of the Schemes of the Enemy, at this Juncture seeking with a strong Hand to molest and invade us.

If we carefully examine the whole Transaction, as set forth in the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel, 2 Chron. xxix, 38, &c. we shall find, that no History can furnish out a more authentic and conspicuous Instance of Unanimity in Prince and People, to forward the good Work of Reformation and Recovery of the true Worship of God; nor do we any where meet with a more signal Interposition of Providence and gracious Deliverance wrought for any People, than was at that Time manifested to the Inhabitants of Judah in their Distress, and perplexed Fear of the Enemy, by cutting off the ravaging and numerous Host of Sennacherib, in possession of their Land, and even at the Gates of their Metropolis.

In the very Height of their Apprehensions of a terrible impending Storm, the Angel of the Lord went out in the Night, and smote in the Camp of the Assyrians, (their Beliegers) an Hundred Four-score and Five Thousand, and in the Morning they were all dead Corpses.

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We may not expect such miraculous and eminent Interposition in our present Danger, but are plainly taught, That our God is not faithfully sought to in vain, that Humiliation and Repentance, Faith and Prayer, when strong and sincere, are effectual to prevail with the Most High.

If he seeth not fit, in a wonderful manner to work, at this, or any other Occasion, our temporal Deliverance; yet, by turning to Him with all our Hearts, we shall establish our eternal Peace, which is more precious than the Quiet and Enjoyments all the Kingdoms and Powers on Earth can bestow. Miracles are long since ceased, and we may not expect to have them now wrought, either in us, or for us.

God is sufficiently made known, and His Truth established; it is a vain Presumption to look for any signal and immediate Interposition from Himself, to call and convert our Souls unto Him. If Men hear not *Moses* and the Prophets, nor will be guided by the ordinary Offices and regular Ministers of Religion, neither will they be persuaded, nor have they Authority to expect Inspiration and Miracles, or Messengers from the Dead, to enlighten and reform them.

SOME of weak and vain Minds may think otherwise, but let us walk as we have the plain intelligible Word of God for a Rule, and not give heed to Dreams, and Fables, and strong Delusions, which bespeak Madness and Folly, rather than true and solid Piety, or any real Communications from Above.

BESIDE the Example of the great and good King in the Text, we have the Command, Example too, of our own pious and most gracious Sovereign: A second *Hezekiah* to his People, equally adhered to and beloved by them, and what is beyond all, we hope, equally dear to his GOD! by Fasting, Repentance and Prayer to seek to the LORD for Defence and Deliverance, in this Time of Danger, Expence, Bloodshed and Trouble. An inveterate and towering Enemy hath been long making Havock, and pouring forth Blood in the Territories and Borders of our close-connected Allies, and even threatened with powerful Force to invade our own Dominions and Country.

WILL not these Things, and other Warnings we have had from the Powers of Heaven, move us to call our own Ways to Remembrance, to put away the Evil of our Doings, and be converted with Integrity of Heart, to fly unto God for Refuge?

OUR

OUR Guilt and great Offences, our Unprofitableness under Judgments and Mercies, our Luke-warmness and Neglect to walk by, and live up to the best Worship in the World established, hath brought the Wrath of God upon us, to cause Divisions at Home, to raise up Enemies abroad, who have long drawn the Sword, and sheathed it in the Bowels of too many of our dear Countrymen and valiant Defenders.

GOD only knows when the Effusion of Christian Blood will cease, or how long our Strength and Treasure will hold, to be able to make a Stand; that ourselves, our Wives and our little Ones, and all that is valuable, become not a Prey to the Hands of Spoilers.

THE Almighty hath indeed begun to be gracious, given us many Advantages over the Enemy, not that we should be more secure, and continue in Sin, but that his merciful Goodness may lead us to more perfect Repentance, a thorough Sense of his Power, and Love of his Mercy, to own our Dependence upon Him, and make it the Delight and Business of our Souls, by a holy Walking and stedfast Faith in his Son JESUS CHRIST, to be of the Number of those whom He will redeem and save from the Hand of the Enemy, and deliver from any bitter Destruction, either temporal or eternal.

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To close all, if we calmly reflect on what we have heard, and seriously consider the threatening Situation we are in, we may well conclude the Necessity of a steady Union in our religious Profession, and thorough Zeal and Integrity to serve the LORD.

REVOLTERS and Schismatics from established Worship, are, in the strong and expressive Language of holy Scripture, branded as Persons *who go a whoring after their own Inventions*; and surely, this cannot be either for their Reputation, their Peace, or their Profit; nor is any genuine Mark of their Understanding and rectitude of Disposition.

To halt between CHRIST and *Belial*, to be divided, which to bow down to and follow, our Pleasures and the Interests of this World, or to provide wisely and effectually for a better to come; to be indifferent and luke-warm in the Love and Service of our God, is not the Way to obtain His Approbation and Blessing, and be happy with Him at the last.

He is worthy all our earliest and our constant Care to please: The present Emergency, the Cause of our assembling, every Incident and Circumstance of our Lives, points Him out as our only Safeguard and Protection.

He

through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

He is not a Man, that he should lie, or deceive those who call upon Him, and put their Trust in His Mercy: Nor can He be deceived by hypocritical and formal Application and Approach, put on in the Face of the Congregation, and the very Pretence to Devotion and Seriousness laid aside as soon as we depart hence.

Our whole Hearts must be with Him, and converted unto Him, from henceforth to serve Him faithfully, if we mean that He should be our Helper, our Rock and our Refuge. Our unaffected Love and sincere Attachment to the Honour of His Name and Laws, is the only Homage, Tribute and Offering He will accept.

This bounden Duty and reasonable Service, with one Consent of Mind and Voice, let us pray to be enabled to render to Him that is powerful, holy, and good: For, consider how great Things are at Stake, not only our Lives, our Liberties, our Properties, our Country, and all our dearest Connections are at this Juncture threatened, but even our very Souls are in jeopardy, and nothing else can secure their Welfare but the Peace and loving Kindness of our heavenly Father, our Redeemer and God; which He of His infinite Mercy vouchsafe us to obtain, through our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST.

To

To whom, with the Father and Holy Spirit, three Persons and one divine Essence, be ascribed all Praise, Obedience and Honour, henceforth and for ever.

Amen.

F I N I S.



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